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Violets and Vexation



“KICK YOUR OWN DOG!”

Violets and Vexation

By

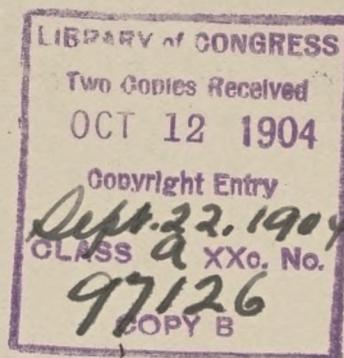
Julian Street &
Frank Finney



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UNITED SHIRT AND COLLAR COMPANY
TROY, N. Y.

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 **I**T AMUSES me to think of the adage about the course of true love not running smooth," she said, with a voice full of happiness. "It's perfect piffle. Look at our case; all happiness—no clouds, and the wedding only forty-three days off."

"Yes," said Billings, "but I think we're different from the average engaged couple—that's the reason. We both like the same things. There's no chance for trouble."

She looked across the lawn where the two bulldogs were frisking playfully.

"Even our dogs are fast friends," she said. "Everything is so lovely! It seems as if the whole world was just made for us."

Billings smiled. "Yes," he said, "but to tell you the truth, Marion, I think the dogs will bear watching. You see, Sport has been used to a man—he's rougher than Boxer. I'd just as soon have an eye on him when they're together."

Miss Millward tossed her head with airy confidence. "Oh, you needn't worry about Boxer," she said. "He can look after himself. He whipped the coachman's dog the other day."

"What sort of a dog?"

"A spaniel," she admitted, "but it's a tough little one."

Billings smiled. "It would be queer if he couldn't whip a spaniel," he said. "Why, Sport won't even look at spaniels. He only——"

There was the sudden sound of growling from the lawn. Billings looked. Sport and Boxer were not playful now. They stood rigid, facing each other, with bristling necks and snapping eyes.

"Great Scott!" he said, jumping up and making for the

steps. "There'd be a little dead Boxer around this place pretty quick unless I'd been here!"

She was indignant.

"You'd better save Sport!" she called after him.

He grinned back over his shoulder.

"Yes," he said, "I'll save him from killing Boxer."

There was a sudden skirmish as he spoke. Boxer lunged. Sport sprang aside, and in another second the two were rolling on the grass, emitting guttural, half choked snarls.

Billings started for them on the double.

"Sport!" he shouted. "Come out of that! Drop him!"

Marion was with him as he reached the dogs.

"Boxer!" she exclaimed, in pretty blonde excitement.

"Leave that dog alone! Stop it instantly!"

But Boxer and Sport were too much occupied to notice. They were at it fast and furious. Marion's pretty lace parasol was being plied vigorously—but not effectively.

Billings was leaning over the dogs trying to catch hold of them. They broke once, but so quickly that he had no time to stop them before Sport ran in again, head down, and caught Boxer by the throat.

"Oh, the cruel beast!" panted Marion, jabbing at him savagely with the parasol. "He wants to choke poor Boxer! Stop him, Jimmy!"

"I'm trying!" he gasped, as he succeeded in catching Sport by the neck and tail.

He lifted his dog into the air, and soon succeeded in breaking its hold upon Boxer's throat.

But Boxer was not satisfied. He rose, wheezing, but belligerent, and made a dash at the helplessly suspended Sport.

Billings had expected this.

He let out a kick at Boxer, and Boxer landed several feet away.

Sport, though high and helpless, was eager for the fray. He was industriously endeavoring to squirm out of his master's grasp.

Again Boxer returned with fury in his eyes, and again Billings kicked him off. After that the dog seemed to realize the futility of further effort and stood still, eying his late antagonist malevolently.

Miss Millward was prettily disheveled. Her hat was at one side. Her hair had shaken out of its usual trim position, and her parasol was broken.

Her eyes flashed, as Billings, hot and tired, snapped the leash on Sport's collar.

"Jimmy!" she said. "How could you kick my Boxer?"

"I wasn't going to let him run in and finish Sport while I had him held up!" said Billings.

"Why didn't you kick your own dog?" she asked.

"Because I had to take him off Boxer's throat," he said. "I had him up where he couldn't do anything. I couldn't let Boxer tackle him like that."

"Boxer would have killed him," she said.

"Boxer wouldn't have ever killed anything again," grinned Billings, "if I had let Sport keep the hold he had on him."

She flared up.

"It isn't fair for one dog to choke another!" she said.
"Sport wasn't fighting fair."

Billings laughed outright.

"That's a new rule," he said. "How long since you became an authority on dog fights?"

"That's right," she said, half tearful. "First set your nasty, snarling, savage beast of a dog on poor innocent Boxer, and then laugh because he nearly kills him."

"But I'm not laughing at that," said Billings. "I don't mean to plague you, Marion. I was laughing because you said dogs shouldn't choke each other in a fight."

"They shouldnt," she exclaimed. "It's brutal."

"I know it," he said. "But so is fighting brutal; and so are dogs when they fight."

"Call your dog that all you like," she said. "But don't call my Boxer brutal."

"All right," he said. "But I'm sorry you don't appreciate Sport's strangle hold. I spent months teaching him that."

"You!" she exclaimed. "You taught him that wicked trick?"

"Yes," he said. "Why not?"

"So that he could murder Boxer!" she said.

"No," said Billings. "So that he could defend himself when attacked. I don't give a hang for a man or dog that can't take care of himself."

"That's intended as a slam at Boxer?" she said, coldly.

"Oh, Marion," said Billings, feeling his broken collar. "Let's let it drop. You're acting as though it was all Sport's fault. They were both at it; they're both bulldogs. One's as good as the other—or as bad as the other, if that's the way you look at it. There's no use of an argument about it."

Her chin went up. "I'm not going to argue," she said. "I'm only glad I found out in time how brutal you are, Jimmy Billings! No wonder Sport is cruel when you brought him up!"

"What do you mean?" he asked, flushing.

"My meaning should be clear!" she said. "That vicious dog of yours should be shot!"

"Well, he won't be shot," said Billings. The heat, the tussle and Marion's temper had joined in trying his patience.

"No, I suppose not," she said, scathingly, "but I'll tell you one thing: the dogs can't live under the same roof, and I don't propose to give up Boxer. You may take your choice—good bye."

They had reached the veranda. As she spoke she left him and walked into the house.

For a moment Billings stared blankly after her. Finally he turned and walked slowly away, Sport following dejectedly at his heels.

Arriving at his rooms he sat down heavily in the low Morris chair, and looked disconsolately at his four-footed companion, who, seeming to appreciate his master's mood, sat on his haunches and regarded Billings solemnly,

"Well, Sport, old man," he began at length, "we're in trouble. Don't you think you deserve to be licked for fighting?"

Sport winked solemnly but declined to commit himself.

"I got my licking," said Billings. "However, we'll not say any more about that. We're in a barrel of trouble, though. It looks as if you'd have to leave your happy home."

He stretched his long legs and surveyed the dog reflectively. Presently he began again, but his voice was softer.

"It isn't up to us to make a stipulation after all, is it, Sport? When you stop to think of it, the girl's the one that makes the sacrifices in this marrying business; we just sit back and take 'em. So the least we can do is to do what we can, isn't it?"



“THE GREAT OLD GOOSE!”

"If she says 'go,' I guess you'll have to, Sport. That's all—but I hate to lose you, old dog.

"She was angry with us to-day, Sport, because we came near eating Boxer up. To-morrow she'll be sunshiny again and maybe she'll relent. We'll send her some violets by the way of penance, and we'll tell her we're very sorry we misbehaved. She'll forgive us, and maybe she'll let you stay if you'll jolly Boxer up and never fight with him again."

On the following afternoon, Marion lay drowsily on the divan, in her own room. Garbed in a pink kimono and ensconced in the pillows she was resting in preparation for the dance that evening. Boxer lay upon the floor, beside her.

Marion had been dreaming over the previous day's disagreement with Jimmy Billings.

With charming lack of logic she still felt that Sport was in the wrong—for had he not come near killing her angelic Boxer? But she also realized that she had been too severe with Jimmy.

Marion was very young—several of her mother's friends whom, it may be noted, boasted marriageable daughters of their own, declared emphatically that she was too young to be engaged.

She was nineteen, and the engagement had been announced almost a year before.

She had known Jimmy always; the two families had been intimate for generations, and the union was looked upon quite as a matter of course.

It was this cut and dried certainty which had robbed the girl of the romance for which she had sometimes longed, and though she loved Jimmy with all her heart she half relished the thought of the little quarrel of the day before—it gave a "tang" to their love affair. You see, Marion was young.

She flung her arms above her head and nestled deeper in the cushions.

"Poor old Jimmy," she said to herself. "He's a dear, and I'm afraid I was mean to him. Still, Sport is vicious. I was right about that. Well, it won't hurt either of them to see that I mean business."

She was growing drowsy.

"Jimmy mustn't—let them fight—he mustn't fight—with Boxer—dear Jimmy——."

And she was asleep.

A bark from Boxer awoke her an hour or more later. Someone was knocking at her door.

"Come in!" she called, with a yawn, and a maid entered.

"A box for you, Miss Marion. It came by messenger." And handing the package to her the servant departed.

"It's from Jimmy, Boxer," she said happily. "It's violets for to-night. Isn't he a darling when we've been cross to him? Dear old Jimmy, he's always thoughtful."

She held the box to her face and sniffed.

"Can't smell them," she murmured, breaking the string. She removed the wrapping paper, and read the card which had been placed inside. "Let's see what he has to say for himself," she said, and read :

"Dearest: Forgive Sport and me, and wear these to-night so I'll know. J."

"Of course I will, bless his heart!" was her unspoken comment, as she turned her attention to the box, and then :

"How funny! It's gray, and has a picture of a lion on it—and it says Lion Brand? Who ever heard of Lion Brand violets?"

She took off the lid.

"Why!" she laughed. "Why, the great old goose has sent me collars!"

She fell back on the cushions laughing.

"Boxer," she said, "our scolding must have affected Jimmy's mind. And just think—I must wear them so he'll know!"

"I'd be the sensation of the evening if I did." She took one out, and putting it around her own slender neck, looked in the glass.

"No, Boxer," she said; "they're pretty, but they don't fit me. I'm afraid I can't wear them, even for Jimmy. They're fifteen-and-a-quarter. But aren't they dandies?"

Jimmy Billings reached the Williams' ball a trifle late that evening. He had been detained at his office. The "Amoureuse" waltz was being played as he hurried to the dressing room to leave his coat and hat.

Here he found Middleton, who was always late, leisurely surveying himself in the glass.

They greeted each other cordially, and Middleton proceeded to volunteer some information.

"By the way," he said, "who do you suppose is here tonight?"

"Don't know" returned Billings, in a tone that indicated plainly that he didn't care.

"Well, it's Jack Reynolds!" Middleton announced with a drawl.

"Jack Reynolds!" Billings echoed, conscious of a tug at his heart, for this man had been at one time a serious rival.

"Yes." Middleton went on, "he's back on leave, or something of that kind, all togged out in gold lace and shoulder straps till you can't rest."

"Naval men are sure popular with the girls," said Billings, leaving the room, "they'll be crowding him as if he were a bargain counter."

He was half way through the door when Middleton called to him.

"Say, hold on, Jimmy. Do you want to sell that dog of yours?"

Billings came slowly back into the room.

"It's just possible that I might if I were sure that he'd be taken care of," he answered reluctantly.

"I want him for a girl," Middleton explained. "I have a theory that she would look kindly upon the man who would furnish her with a discreet confidant, and there's no doubt that she'd be good to him."

Billings stood looking thoughtfully at the floor for quite a minute.

"Lunch with me to-morrow and we'll talk it over," he said.

Billings greeted his hostess and then hurried to the ball room.

As the moving throng swept by him he saw Her dancing with Lieutenant Reynolds and smiling gaily over a huge bunch of American beauties.

It seemed to him that his heart skipped several beats when he saw the flowers. Then he reassured himself by softly cursing the messenger boy.

"She never got my violets," he muttered confidently.

As soon as the music ceased he strode over to her, and she, with a puzzling, uncertain little smile held out her hand in wel-



BILLINGS EXPLAINS.

come. She was alone, for a time at least, and Billings hastened to avail himself of the opportunity.

"I sent you a message to-day," he whispered. "The idiot boy never—"

"Oh, yes; I received it, all right," she returned, avoiding his direct gaze. "It came about half-after-five."

For a moment he was dumb and looked at her blankly.

"You mean you—got it, and —didn't care to wear them?"

She smiled at him quizzically and nodded.

He looked at the American beauties, dazed.

Reynolds! Yes, that was it. The gold lace had dazzled her! These were his flowers!

Well, if that was the way the land lay, he'd be game! He'd not let her see how bitterly she had wounded him.

"Very well, Marion," he said, looking squarely into her eyes.

The look frightened Marion—she felt that she had gone too far with her teasing—but when she would have explained he had left her.

Billings was in no mood for dancing after that. But before he left the dance he sought out Middleton.

"I've changed my mind about the dog," he said. "I'm going to keep him."

He entered his rooms early—it was only ten o'clock—and his mind was full of pictures of Marion, dancing gaily with Reynolds and the other men. He talked with Sport until that faithful animal fell asleep. Then he lay awake, thinking; it was nearly dawn when he slept.

That same night, after the dance was over, another bulldog in a nearby house was the recipient of very secret confidences, and had Boxer been a more speculative animal he would probably have wondered why there were tears in his mistress's eyes.

His night of sad reflections convinced Billings that Marion Millward's treatment of him had only one meaning—she wished the engagement broken. He tried to resign himself to his fate, but it was a wan and worn looking Jimmy that confronted him in his glass the next morning.

A man who feels used up and looks used up will oftentimes try to counteract the conditions by clothing himself brightly and freshly.

With a long face, Jimmy selected a cheerful, light-colored suit. Then he bethought him of the new shirts and collars he

had purchased the day before. He had not put them away ; they were on his dresser still wrapped as when they were delivered. He opened the Lion Brand shirt box and selected a blue and white negligee. Then he turned his attention to the collars.

As he took up the box a faint odor came to him. He tore off the wrappings and removed the cover. He stood looking down into the box wonderingly for many minutes, unconscious of everything but a very full feeling in his throat and an almost uncontrollable desire to shout.

Then, very carefully he took from the box a bunch of half-wilted violets and kissed them reverently. He put them back and, thrusting the box under his arm, hastened from the house, snatching a hat as he went.

Marion was alone, and as she came into the room, Billings, very happy, very contrite, and altogether irrational, held out the box to her.

Her eyes met his, but she did not speak at first.

She took the crumpled flowers from the box, and pinned them to her corsage.

Billings held out his arms to her.

Marion smiled, but happy tears welled into her eyes.

"Do you want the collars ?" she asked him in a shaky voice.

"No, sweetheart ; it's you I want," he said. "I've been utterly miserable since yesterday."

She nestled in his arms with a sigh of content.

"I was so dazed," he said. "I brought the flowers and the collars home together and got the boxes mixed. It was very stupid, dearie."

She turned her face up to his.

"Jimmy," she said, after a little while, "I won't ever tease you again ; and—and the dogs must learn to get along together."





THE MC HURDLE SHIRT WILL NOT BULGE.

The Way They Do Things In Troy

A MAN from Troy, N. Y., where they make Lion Brand Shirts and Collars, asked me to go to the factory there and write about them.

As Lion Brand Collars are retailed at two for twenty-five cents I wasn't particularly in sympathy with the plan. I didn't think I could write an article that would convince other men that they should wear two-for-a-quarter collars when I never pay less than a quarter apiece for my own. (Sometimes, when I feel luxurious, I pay forty cents.)

Besides, I've been used to writing about theatres and wars and sporting events and sudden deaths, and shirts and collars didn't appeal to me as offering much chance for a good lively "story."

I explained to the collar man that I was out of sympathy with his game; that I bought twenty-five cent collars. He laughed at me and told me I wouldn't wear 'em if I knew about collars.

Then took place this interview:

Said I: "You don't actually mean to say that your collars at two for twenty-five cents are as good as others at a quarter each?"

"Yes, they are," he said, "and I can prove it."

"You might as well say," I answered, "that a seventy-five dollar suit of clothes isn't any better than a thirty dollar suit."

"That's different," he answered; "a suit is big enough to put lots of money in and make it count. A collar is a little bit of a thing. To make it as well as it can be made costs just so much. We make collars that way, and sell 'em at two for a quarter."

I saw that the man was sincere, but I thought enthusiasm had made him jump the track.

"Well, if your Lion Brand Collars are just as good as others that cost twice as much, how can the other makers charge twice as much as you do? It stands to reason that people would all buy yours."

"You've never bought ours, have you?" he asked me.

"No."

"Have you ever had one on?"

"No."

"Then, what do you know about it?"

I thought.

Gradually he broke into a smile. "You're a fine example," he said, "of the man who doesn't wear Lion Brand Collars because they don't cost enough to suit him."

"Then, the people who make twenty-five cent collars must reap terrific profits?" I said.

"Perhaps they do," he replied, "but it costs them more to sell their collars than it costs us."

"How?"

"Heavy advertising, for one thing," he explained. "Then, besides, in order to get retailers to handle their goods, many of them 'buy' the dealer. They paint his store for him, perhaps. They give him show cases. They buy out his old stock. This costs a lot of money, and the man who buys collars has to pay for it. The dealer who receives these favors, contracts, in return, to carry for a term of years the goods of the manufacturer who 'bought' him. Many dealers who are thus tied up have told me that they know Lion Brand Shirts and Collars are the best on the market, but they can't carry our goods on account of contracts with other manufacturers. They get sick of the contract, though, and when the time is up they're glad to put in Lion Brand."

"I've got on a quarter collar now," I said. "Do you mean to say you can make as good a one to sell at twelve and a half cents?"

"We can beat it all to smash!" he averred, positively. "Why, that's a three-ply collar you have on! Every Lion Brand collar is four-ply. It has the two outer strips of fine material and two linings—one to give weight and one for stiffness, toughness and durability. Three-ply collars look all right to begin with, but they get thin and papery after a few launderings, and they can't wear as well as a four-ply collar. Very few collars besides Lion Brand are four-ply."

He took me into an enormous room where girls were putting the collar linings together. He showed me that one lining was tough and shape-holding, while the other was thick to give the collar that fine, heavy look.

"I'm satisfied on that point," said I, "but do your collars fit, as more expensive collars do?"

"Better!" he said.



WHERE COLLARS ARE MADE.

Again I was incredulous. "Go ahead," I said, "prove it to the jury."

"Far be it from me," he said, "to make personal remarks, but the turned down collar you are now wearing jumps open in front."

"I had to pull my necktie through it very hard this morning," I explained, "and anyhow I never saw a collar that wasn't inclined to jump open in front. You needn't try to tell me that yours don't do the same thing."

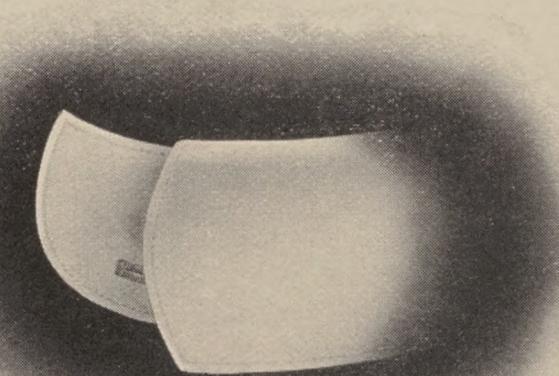
"That's just what I'm going to tell you," he said, "and I'm going to make you tell it back to me. Look here!"

Then he took up a Lion Brand collar and showed me what I think is one of the greatest little schemes I've ever seen. They call it "The Lock that Locks," and that tells the story.

It's one of those simple little things that makes you say: "Why didn't I think of that?" And yet nobody did think of it until the President of the Lion Brand outfit got it. (He's an inventor, by the way, and has gotten up machinery which helps the Lion Brand people to make infinitely better collars at infinitely less cost—but that's another story.)

"The Lock that Locks" is all in the cut of the flap that you tuck in in front when you button the collar. The flap has

a rounded upper edge that curves upward and fits snugly into the fold of the collar. There it hangs like grim death—you can't budge it—I know, because I can't get on without it now, and I want you to under-stand that I had no use whatever for two-for-a-quarter collars when I made that trip to Troy.

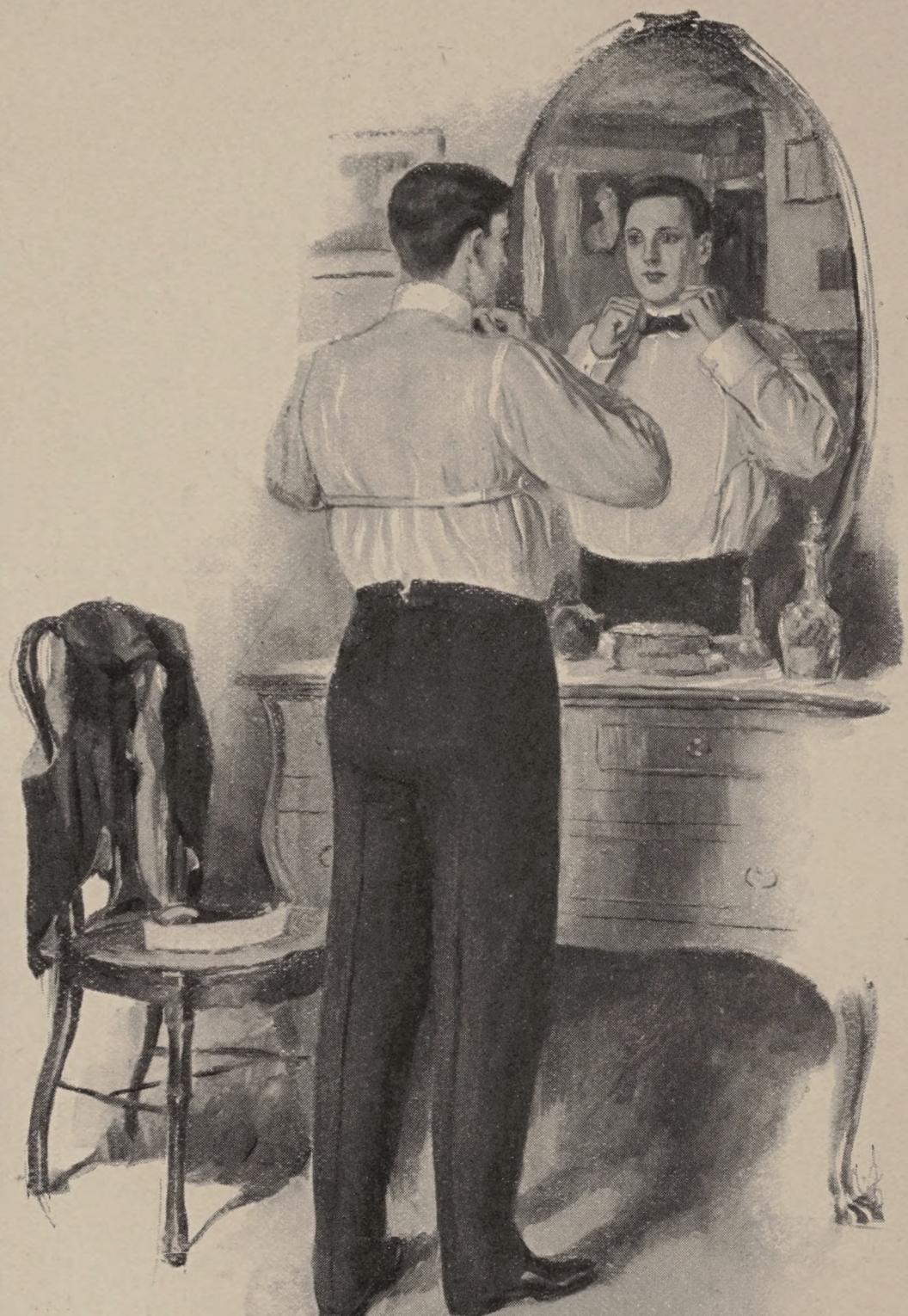


HERE'S THE LOCK THAT LOCKS

It holds like a padlock but it does not look like one. I admitted it to my friend the collar man.

"But other people will be making it," I said.

"Nay, nay," he answered.



THE MC HURDLE SHIRT.

“Why not?”

“Because it’s barricaded in with patents. If a man wants the Lock that Locks’ he has to get Lion Brand Collars.”

“Now,” he said, “I’ll show you another reason why our collars fit, and again I’ll take the liberty of demonstrating on you.”

“March on to Port Arthur,” said I.

“That collar of yours fits too tight on the neckband of your shirt,” he said. “It has pulled the neckband together until it wrinkles the shirt in front. It has also wrinkled the neckband so that it irritates your neck—at least, I hope it irritates your neck.”

“Yes,” said I, “your wishes have come true. It does hurt a little. I suppose you’ll say that if I had on one of your collars my neck wouldn’t hurt?”

“No,” he answered, “but if you had on one of our shirts and one of our collars you’d be all right. They’re made to fit each other—therefore they’re bound to fit you.”

“I bought them in the same place,” said I.

“But they aren’t made under the same brand,” he said.

“How do you know?”

Because we are the only concern in the country that makes shirts and collars under one brand—Lion Brand.”

That seemed a good reason.

We looked at each other.

“Well, what do you think about Lion Brand Collars at two for a quarter?” he asked me, with a smile.

“In a word,” I said, “I’m going to wear ‘em. But you’ll have to prove it to me about the shirts.”

“I can go through the shirt end of it just as I have with the collars,” he said. “The reason that our shirts fit is that we pay no attention to the yardage.”

“Yardage,” I exclaimed. “As I haven’t any dictionary with me, I am afraid you must define.”

“Yardage,” he replied, “is a technical term of the business of shirt making. Some shirts cut thirty yards, some thirty-five yards and some forty yards of cloth. It is the practice of most manufacturers to stint the yardage as much as possible. This renders the making of a good fitting shirt impossible.”

“I see; what you mean is that you always make fitting shirts whatever the waste may be.”

“Exactly! We cut them from forty yards as cheerfully as from thirty. Our only care is to get the best result.”



IT HOLDS.

We talked a lot more, and I learned a great deal about collars and shirts that would interest anyone, but it would fill ten books like this.

I also saw the economies of the Lion Brand Company. They have their own box factory, saving the profits the paper box maker would ordinarily earn. They have their own saw mill, where they saw up boards and make the crates in which the shirts and collars are shipped away. They buy the timber standing, from which these crates are made; and they saw the logs into boards. There isn't any waste. The thin strips of cloth that can't be used in collars are used to tie half finished collars into bundles, as they are sent about the factory. Later these strips of cloth are sold to paper mills, and for aught I know the paper on which I am now writing may be made of them.

I mention these things to show how carefully the Lion Brand people run their huge plant, in order to sell their collars to you and me as low as 2 for 25 cents, and their shirts at from \$1 to \$3.50.

Now, if you aren't convinced that Lion Brand Collars and Shirts are the best on the market, you're not convinced of what I know.

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